

OUR DOSSIER ON VALENCIA PRESENTS VARIOUS ASPECTS OF THE CULTURAL TRADITION AND ECONOMIC AND ARTISTIC SITUATION OF THE COUNTRY, PART OF THE CATALAN CULTURAL AREA AND KNOWN AROUND THE WORLD FOR THE ORANGES IT EXPORTS AND ALSO FOR ITS GROWING TOURIST OFFER.

EVER SINCE THE MIDDLE AGES, VALENCIA HAS BEEN ONE OF THE CENTRES OF CATALAN CULTURE. MANY OF THE CLASSICS OF CATALAN LITERATURE ARE VALENCIAN. CULTURE IN VALENCIA HAS ITS OWN CHARACTERISTICS AND HAS NO NEED TO FOLLOW IN THE WAKE OF CULTURAL INITIATIVES ARISING IN CATALONIA. VALENCIA AND CATALONIA ARE TWO SISTER COUNTRIES AND COMPLEMENT ONE ANOTHER.

WE ARE PLEASED TO OPEN OUR DOSSIER WITH AN INTRODUCTION TO THE WORK OF THE PAINTER JOAQUIM SOROLLA (1863-1923), WHO TODAY IS CONSIDERED ONE OF THE BEST VALENCIAN ARTISTS OF RECENT TIMES AND WITHOUT DOUBT ONE OF THE MOST SENSITIVE PAINTERS TO THE COLOURS OF THE MEDITERRANEAN SEA.



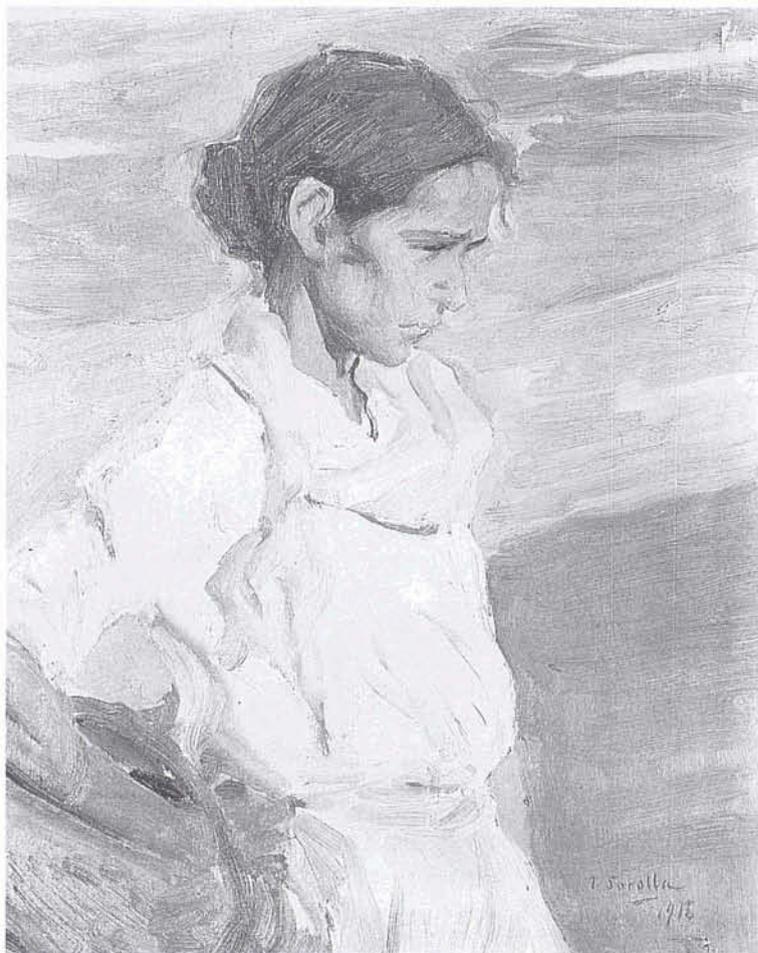


SOROLLA, *TRAIENT LA BARCA* (TAKING THE BOAT OUT)



SOROLLA, *NENS AL MAR* (CHILDREN AT THE SEA), 1908

# JOAQUIM SOROLLA



PESCADORA VALENCIANA (VALENCIAN FISHERWOMAN), 1916

JOAQUIM SOROLLA IS CONSIDERED A MODERN PAINTER, RELATED TO THE SCHOOL OF EUROPEAN REALISM. HIS PAINTING STANDS OUT FOR ITS VIGOUR, THE PURITY OF ITS COLOURS AND ITS INDEPENDENCE FROM FASHIONS. HE DIRECTED HIS WORK TOWARDS A SINGLE IDEAL: TO PAINT NATURE, AND HIS PAINTING IS BASED ON PURELY VISUAL VALUES TAKEN FROM REALITY.

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PESCADORS VALENCIANS (VALENCIAN FISHERFOLK), 1895

**A**t the end of the 19th century, Valencia was an important artistic centre producing great artists, whose training was founded on the education received at the Real Acadèmia de Belles Arts de Sant Carles, as happened in Madrid and Barcelona with the academies of San Fernando and Sant Jordi, respectively.

The teaching of the academies, together with the increase in institutional aid, such as the grants awarded by the Valencia Deputation for studying in the Spanish Academy in Rome, and a growing bourgeois clientele, gave artists greater possibilities at a moment of change and transit. These artists were faced with the assimilation of classical tastes and teaching, which were characterised in painting by the use of historic, religious or social subject matter, in opposition to the new tendencies: Impressionism, Fauvism, Cubism and Surrealism, which marked the art of the beginning of the century.

Joaquim Sorolla was born in Valencia in 1863, in the midst of this atmosphere of widespread change, and grew up and was educated in the same city. He studied at the Real Acadèmia de Sant Carles, where he was taught by Emili Sala, Ignasi Pinazo, Domingo and Mu-

ñoz Degrain. He practiced by copying Velázquez and Ribera in the Museum of El Prado. At the age of twenty-one, he was awarded a grant to study at the Spanish Academy of Fine Art in Rome, and from 1890 to 1900 he submitted work to the principal galleries and exhibitions of Madrid, Paris, Munich, Chicago, Berlin, Vienna and Venice, and received important prizes.

He directed his work towards a single ideal: to paint nature. Between 1901 and 1905, he painted the five hundred pictures that made up his first one-man exhibition, at the Georges Petit Gallery in Paris, in 1906. At the end of 1911, he signed a contract with Archer Milton Huntington to paint the *Visió d'Espanya*, which was to keep him occupied during the following seven years. Exhausted by the effort, in 1920 he had an attack of hemiplegia, which left him unable to work. He died in 1923.

Joaquim Sorolla is considered a modern painter, related to the school of European Realism. His painting stands out for its vigour, the purity of its colours and its independence from fashions. Critics reproached and reproach him a lack of depth and of content in his painting, which is based on purely visual values taken from reality: although, as

Doctor Carmen Gràcia points out, it's difficult to tell if his apparent superficiality implied a lack of concern for problems or simply a confrontation with them from a more rational and optimistic perspective.

During the months of December 1989 and January 1990, there was an important exhibition devoted to Joaquim Sorolla at the Valencian Institute of Modern Art, following its presentation in New York, Saint Louis and San Diego. The exhibition was visited by a large number of people, especially in Valencia, where the painter is considered a "national glory". Organised by the Valencian Institute of Modern Art in collaboration with the San Diego Museum (California) and with the support of private and public organisations, it presented a selection of some ninety pictures, chosen and arranged by the exhibition organiser, Mr Edmund Peel. All the paintings came from private and public collections in Spain, the United States, France, Italy, Switzerland and Japan. This is the first time the public has been able to see a broad selection of this artist's production.

Although not one of the biggest exhibitions of this painter's work, it was one of the most complete, since it gave an



NENS A LA PLATJA (CHILDREN AT THE BEACH)



L'ESCALLERA (SAN SEBASTIÁN) (THE BREAKWATER)



AUTORETRAT [SELF-PORTRAIT], 1911

original, overall view of Sorolla's pictures, in an attempt to get away from the usual clichés and introduce new, little-known themes and treatments (landscapes in Asturias, Toledo and Seville, floral motifs, etc.).

The exhibition, which was arranged in chronological order, presented the five characteristic periods of the work of Sorolla:

The formative years (1880-1900), covering all the themes the painter handled during this period: Orientalist, mythological, social, religious and local, with work produced in Valencia, Rome and Paris, and with two key paintings: *La tornada de la pesca* and *Trista herència*.

The years of maturity (1900-1912), devoted to his ideal. During this period he

Painted landscapes, views of cities, garden scenes, views of the sea and beach scenes.

"Visió d'Espanya" (1912-1920), dominated by the contract he had signed with the Hispanic Society of America for a series of large-scale panels in oils, representing different Spanish traditions.

Notes and sketches from nature, which capture moments of light and movement, smaller paintings painted in Guipuzcoa, Biarritz and the Valencian coast, which reveal themselves as vital to an evaluation of the painter's production.

Finally, the portraits, which follow two

approaches: a traditional one and a more original one of portraits painted in natural surroundings.

After the death of Joaquim Sorolla, there was a reaction against "Sorollisme" and the movement was considered extinct. This exhibition and the catalogue prepared for the show offer the public a new, revised view of the painter's rich production and his personal relations with other artists from all over the world, thereby reaffirming his value for one part of the public and revealing it to another.

Most of Joaquim Sorolla's legacy, including his house and studio, provisionally the property of the Spanish state, can be seen in Calle Martínez Campos, in Madrid, where they constitute the Sorolla Museum. ●